



## A Grave and Serious Advice of the MINISTERS of the KIRK of SCOT- LAND, to Masters of Families that they may govern according to the Word of God.

**B**esides the Publick Worship in Congregations, mercifully established in this Land in great Purity; it is expedient and necessary, that Secret Worship of each person alone, and private Worship of Families, be pressed and set up; that with national Reformation the profession and power of godliness both personal and domestick be advanced.

I. And first for secret worship: It is most necessarie, that every one a part and by themselves be given to Prayer and Meditation, the unspeakable benefit whereof is best known to them who are exercised therein, This being the mean whereby in a special way communion with God is entertained, and right preparation for all other duties obtained: And therefore it becommeth not only Pastors within their several Charges to press persons of all sorts to perform this duty Morning and Evening, and at other occasions, but also it is incumbent to the head of every Family, to have a care that both themselves and all within their charge be daily diligent herein.

II. The ordinary duties comprehended under the exercise of Piety, which should be in Families when they are convened to that effect, are these: First, prayer and praises performed, with a special reference as well to the publick condition of the Kirk of God and this Kingdome, as to the present case of the Family, and every member thereof. Next, Reading of Scriptures with Chatechizing in a plain way, that the understandings of the simpler may be the better enabled to profit under the publick Ordinances, and they made more capable to understand the Scriptures when they are read; together with godly conferences, tending to the edification of all the members in the most holy faith; as also, admonition and rebuke upon just reasons from these who have authority in the family.

III. As the Charge & office of interpreting the holy Scriptures is a part of the Ministerial calling, which none (howsoever otherwise qualified) should take upon him in any place, but he that is daily called thereunto by God and his Kirk. So in every Family where there is any that can read, the holy Scriptures should be read ordinarily to the family; and it is commendable that thereafter they confer, and by way of conference make some good use of what hath been read and heard, As for example, if any sin be reproved in the word read, use may be made thereof, to make all the family circumspect and watchfull against the same; or if any judgement be threatened or mentioned to have been inflicted in that portion of Scripture which is read, use may be made to make all the family fear, lest the same or a worse judgement befall them, unless they beware of the sin that procured it. And finally if any duty be required, or comfort held forth in a promise, use may be made to stir up themselves to employ Christ for strength to enable them for doing the commanded duty, and to apply

ply the offered comfort; In all which the Master of the family is to have the chief hand, and any member of the family may propound a question or doubt for resolution.

IV. The head of the family is to take care that none of the family withdraw himself from any part of family-worship. And seeing the ordinary performance of all the parts of family-Worship belongeth properly to the head of the family, the Minister is to stir up such as are lazy, and train up such as are weak to a fitness for these exercises; It being alwaies free to persons of quality to entertain one approved by the Presbytery for performing family Exercise: And in other families where the head of the family is unfit, that another constantly residing in the family, approved by the Minister and Session, may be employed in that service; wherein the minister and Session are to be countable to the presbytery. And if a Minister by divine providence be brought to any family, it is requisite that at no time he convene a part of the family for worship, secluding the rest; except in singular cases specially concerning these parties which (in Christian prudence) need not or ought not to be imparted to others.

V. Let no idler who hath no Particular calling, or vagrant person under pretence of a calling, be suffered to perform Worship in families to or for the same; seeing persons tainted with errors, or aiming at division, may be ready (after the manner) to creep into houses, and lead captive silly and unstable souls.

VI. At family-Worship a special care is to be had, that each family keep by themselves; neither requiring, inviting, nor admitting persons from divers families, unless it be those who are lodged with them, or at meal, or otherwise with them upon some lawful occasion.

VII. Whatsoever hath been the effects and fruits of meetings of persons of divers families in the times of corruption or trouble (in which cases many things are commendable, which otherwise are not tollerable,) yet when God hath blessed us with Peace and the purity of the Gospel, such meetings of persons of divers families (except in the cases mentioned in these directions) are to be disapproved, as tending to the hinderance of the religious exercise of each family by itself, to the prejudice of the Publick Ministry, to the renting of the families of particular Congregations, and (in progress of time) of the whole Kirk: besides many offences which may come thereby to the hardning of the hearts of carnall men, and grief of the godly.

VIII. On the Lords day, after every one of the family apart, and the whole family together have sought the Lord (in whose hands the preparation of mens hearts are) to fit them for the publick Worship, and to bless to them the publick Ordinances, the Master of the family ought to take care that all within his charge repair to the publick Worship, that he and they may joyn with the rest of the Congregation; And, the publick worship being finished, after prayer he should take an account what they have heard; and thereafter to spend the rest of the time which they may spare in Catechizing, and in spiritual conferences upon the Word of God: Or else (going apart) they ought to apply themselves to reading, meditation, and secret prayer, that they may confirm and increase their communion with God; that so the profit which they found in the Publick Ordinances may be cherished and promoted, and they more edified unto eternal life.

IX. So many as can conceive Prayer, ought to make use of that gift of God: albeit those who are rude and weaker may begin at a set form of prayer; but so, as they be not sluggish in stirring up in themselves (according to their daily necessities) the Spirit of Prayer, which is given to all the children of God in some measure, To which effect they ought to be the more fervent, frequent in secret Prayer to God for enabling of their hearts to conceive, and their tongues to express convenient desires to God for their family, and in the mean time, for their greater encouragement, let these materials of Prayer be meditated upon, and made use of, as followeth: Let them confess to God how unworthy they are to come in his presence, and how unfit to worship



worship his Majesty; and therefore earnestly ask of God the Spirit of Prayer.

They are to confess their sins & the sins of the family, accusing, judging, and condemning themselves for them, till they bring their souls to some measure of true humiliation.

They are to pour out their souls to God, in the name of Christ, by the Spirit, for forgiveness of sins, for grace to repent, to believe, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, and that they may serve God with joy and delight walking before him.

They are to give thanks to God for his many mercies to his People, and to themselves, and especially for his love in Christ, and for the light of the Gospel.

They are to pray for such particular benefits, Spiritual and Temporal, as they stand in need of for the time (whether it be Morning or Evening) as health or sickness, prosperity or adversity.

They ought to pray for the Kirk of Christ in general, for all the Reformed Kirks, and for this Kirk in particular, and for all that suffer for the Name of Christ, for all our Superiors, and their Children, for the Magistrates, Ministers, and whole body of the Congregation whereof they are Members, as well for their Neighbours absent in their lawful affairs, as for those that are at home.

The Prayer may be closed with an earnest desire, that God may be glorified in the coming of the Kingdom of his Son, and in the doing of his Will; and with assurance that themselves are accepted, and what they have asked according to his Will shall be done.

X. These exercises ought to be performed in great sincerity, without delay, laying aside all exercises of worldly business or hinderances, notwithstanding the mockings of Atheists, and prophane men; in respect of the great mercies of God to this Land, and of his severe Correction, wherewith lately he hath exercised us: And to this effect, persons of eminency (and all Elders of the Kirk) not onely ought to stir up themselves and their Families to diligence herein, but also to concur effectually, that in all other families, where they have power and charge, the said exercises be conscientiously performed.

X I. Besides the ordinary duties in Families, which are above mentioned, extraordinary duties both of Humiliation and Thanksgiving are to be carefully performed in Families, when the Lord by extraordinary occasions (private or publick) calleth for them.

X I I. Seeing the Word of God requireth, That we should consider one another to provoke unto love and good works; Therefore at all times, and specially in this time, wherein prophaneſſe abounds, and Mockers, walking after their own lusts, think it strange that others run not with them to the same excess of riot, Every Member of this Kirk ought to stir up themselves and one another to the duties of mutual Edification, by Instruction, Admonition, Rebuke, exhorting one another to manifest the grace of God, in denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and in living godly, soberly, and righteously in this present world, by comforting the feeble-minded, and praying with or for one another; Which duties respectively are to be performed upon special occasions offered by Divine Providence; as namely, when under any calamity, grosse or great difficulty, counsel or comfort is sought, or when an Offender is to be reclaimed by private Admonition, and if that be not effectual, by joyning one or two more in the Admonition, according to the rule of Christ, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

X I I I. And because it is not given to every one to speak a word in season to a wearied or distressed conscience, it is expedient, that a person (in that case) finding no ease after the use of ordinary means private and publick, have their address to their own Pastor, or some experienced Christian: But if the person troubled in Conscience be of that condition, or of that sex, that Discretion, Modesty, or fear of scandal, requireth a godly, grave, and secret Friend to be present with them in  
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their said addresse, it is expedient that such a Friend be present.

XIV. When Persons of divers Families are brought together by Divine Providence, being abroad upon their particular Vocations, or any necessary occasions, as they would have the Lord their God with them whithersoever they go, they ought to walk with God, and nor neglect the duties of Prayer and Thanksgiving, but take care that the same be performed by such as the Company shall judge fittest; and that they likewise take heed that no corrupt communication proceed out of their mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the Hearers.

The drift and scope of all these directions is no other but that upon the one part the power and practice of godliness among all the Ministers and Members of this Kirk, according to their several places and vocations, may be cherished and advanced, and all impiety and mocking of religious Exercises suppressed; And upon the other part, that under the name and pretext of Religious Exercises no such Meetings or Practices be allowed, as are apt to breed Error, Scandal, Schism, contempt or misregard of the publick ordinances and Ministers, or neglect of the duties of particular callings, or such other evils as are the works not of the Spirit, but of the Flesh, and are contrary to truth and peace.

A. K. E. R.

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